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ABSTRACT

This report reviews prekindergarten programs in fiscal years 1987-88 in Illinois, where an estimated 112,000 children of 3-4 years of age are at risk of academic failure. Each year, State Board of Education staff collect data on prekindergarten programs and the children they serve in order to answer four primary questions: (1) What are the characteristics of children served? (2) What are the characteristics of prekindergarten projects in Illinois? (3) How well do children do in prekindergarten and kindergarten? and (4) What factors seem to be related to success of children in prekindergarten? Sections of this report concern state requirements for receipt of grants for prekindergarten programs, evaluation of the state's prekindergarten program, and conclusions. Findings of the evaluation suggest that the state's program is successful even though relatively few children have participated in it. Children with a second year of prekindergarten program experience performed better in kindergarten readiness tests than children with only one year. Children of involved parents were more successful than those of uninvolved parents. Days of attendance may be related to children's success. Appendices provide the State Board of Education's policy statement on early childhood education, relevant sections of the School code of Illinois, and related tables of data. (RH)

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Illinois School Improvement Update Series

PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF ACADEMIC FAILURE

PROGRESS REPORT

MAY 1989

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FOREWORD

Legislation enacted in 1985 authorized the State Board of Education to administer a new grant program which enabled school districts to operate prekindergarten programs for children age 3 to 5 years old. The statute also required the State Board of Education to report to the General Assembly by July 1, 1989, and every 3 years thereafter, on results and progress of students who were enrolled in preschool education programs. This progress report fulfills that requirement.

This report was written by Dr. Sally B. Pancrazio, Acting Executive Deputy Superintendent, based on data analyzed and collected by Richard Yong, Ph.D. and Edith Helmich, M.A., respectively.

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Robert Leininger
Interim State Superintendent

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001

Thomas Lay Burroughs
Chairman

Robert Leininger
Interim State Superintendent

May, 1989

To The Honorable Members of the Eighty-Sixth General Assembly:

Legislation enacted in 1985 authorized the State Board of Education to administer a new grant program which enabled school districts to operate prekindergarten programs for children age 3 to 5 years old. The statute also required the State Board of Education to report to the General Assembly by July 1, 1989, and every 3 years thereafter, on results and progress of students who were enrolled in preschool education programs.

There are an estimated 112,000 children who are considered to be at risk of academic failure. State appropriations for the program have been significantly lower than the amount projected by the Board as necessary to serve these children. Currently, less than 10% of the potentially eligible children are served.

The results of the progress report are very encouraging, even after a relatively short period of time, and make our arguments for adequate appropriations even stronger. The early results show:

- At the end of the prekindergarten program, a majority of the children were judged by their teachers to be ready for kindergarten.
- After a year in kindergarten, most children who previously were in the prekindergarten program were performing at a level expected of other children and were promoted to first grade.
- Even though Chicago children had a greater preponderance of characteristics associated with being at risk of academic failure, the performance of children in Chicago was comparable to the performance of children served in downstate projects.
- Parent participation in the prekindergarten programs was extremely high.
- The screening procedures identified a number of children who had potential health problems and were successful in identifying the pool of at risk children for whom the prekindergarten program was designed.

There is, of course, much we still need to learn about the progress of children after their prekindergarten program, but it is clear that the state's dollars have been very well invested.

Sincerely,

Robert Leininger

Robert Leininger
Interim State Superintendent of Education

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Background	1
Requirements for Receiving Grants for Prekindergarten Programs	1
Appropriation and Service Levels for the Prekindergarten Program	3
Evaluation Design and Limitations	5
Findings	7
Summary and Conclusions	12
Appendices:	
A. State Board of Education Policy Statement on Early Childhood Education	14
B. The School Code of Illinois Section 2-3.71	16
C. Data Tables	18

TABLE OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Appropriation and Service Levels for Prekindergarten Program	4
2	Ethnicity of Children Served in Prekindergarten Program, Statewide	18
3	Ethnicity of Children Served in Chicago Prekindergarten Program .	18
4	Family Structure of Children Served, Statewide	19
5	Family Structure of Children Served, Chicago and Downstate	19
6	Primary Language of Children Served in Prekindergarten Program ..	20
7	Gender of Children Served in Prekindergarten Program	20
8	Identification of Health Status of Children Served in Prekindergarten Program	21
9	Prior Preschool Experience of Children Served in Prekindergarten	22
10	Family Income Level of Children Served in Prekindergarten Program	23
11	Average Attendance and Absence Days of Children Served in the Prekindergarten Program	23
12	Number and Percent of Children Served by Types of Programs	24
13	Number of Participating Districts and Joint Agreements	24
14	Services Subcontracted to Other Groups	25
15	Days Per Week and Minutes Per Day in Operation	26
16	Number of Children Screened, Enrolled and Unserved	26
17	Number and Percent of Children Whose Parents Participated in Parent Program Activities	27
18	Primary Uses of State Funds for Prekindergarten Programs in Downstate Illinois	27
19	Performance of Prekindergarten Children	28

20 Performance Levels for Chicago and Downstate Participants in Kindergarten 30

21 Percentage Distribution of Ratings of Students in Kindergarten Readiness Skills by Number of Years of Prekindergarten Programs Attended 30

22 Percentage Distribution of Ratings of Students in Kindergarten Readiness Skills by Parent Participation in the Programs 31

23 Percentage Distribution of Ratings of Students in Kindergarten Readiness Skills by Days Attended Per Year 31

ILLINOIS PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF ACADEMIC FAILURE - A PROGRESS REPORT

Background

On May 9, 1985, the State Board of Education adopted a policy statement on early childhood education.* Legislation enacted in 1985 authorized the State Board of Education to administer a new grant program which enabled school districts to operate prekindergarten programs for children aged 3 to 5 years old. The statute (Sec. 2-3.71, The School Code of Illinois) identified the eligible population to be served in this program as "children who were at risk of academic failure because of their home and community environment."*

The statute required the State Board of Education to report to the General Assembly by July 1, 1989, and every 3 years thereafter, on results and progress of students who were enrolled in preschool education programs. This progress report of the State Board of Education to the Illinois General Assembly on the Illinois Prekindergarten Program fulfills that requirement. The report is comprised of the following sections: state requirements, evaluation of the program, and conclusions.

Requirements for Receiving Grants for Prekindergarten Program

Research has shown that a disproportionate share of children at risk of academic failure come from families who are poor, families where English is not spoken as the primary language in the home, or families where parent(s) either are teenagers or have not yet completed high school. Children at risk also may include children who were born prematurely or who had low birth weight; these children may be developmentally delayed, but are not physically disabled. However, the state-required procedure for identifying children who are at risk of academic failure in the Illinois program is through screening and assessment of individual children, rather than through the child's membership in a given group or the characteristics of a child's family. A number of instruments and methods are available to assist in assessing the development of young children.

The State Board of Education, through the administration of the grants process and the monitoring of state-funded programs, encourages the development of programs designed to provide positive, nurturing experiences essential to helping young children at risk develop intellectually, socially and emotionally. The Board's position on early childhood education

*See Appendix A for a copy of the Board's policy statement and Appendix B for a copy of the statute.

is illustrated in the following statements taken from the Request for Proposals for the Prekindergarten Program for Children at Risk of Academic Failure:

> As future academic success in school is strongly influenced by the character of early experiences, children identified as being at risk of academic failure can acquire improved chances for success through identification and participation in early childhood education programs. Further, the State Board of Education recognizes that significant developmental differences exist among children and that particular attention should be given to such individual differences in the development of these programs. Last, the State Board of Education recognizes that successful programs have, and will continue to include, a strong parent education and involvement program.
>
> Based on the above beliefs and supportive research, the State Board requirements for funding the prekindergarten at-risk program include:
>
> - A staff/child ratio which does not exceed 1 to 10 and no more than 20 children in the classroom setting;
>
> - A written statement of the goals and objectives of the program;
>
> - A definition of the criteria by which students will be determined to be at risk of academic failure, addressing at least the following areas: vocabulary, visual-motor integration, language and speech development, fine and gross motor skills and social skills;
>
> - A description of the procedures used to screen children to determine their need for educational services. Screening must include at least the following components:
>
>   1. required parental permission for screening,
>
>   2. parent interview/child history,
>
>   3. vision and hearing screening (according to the Illinois Department of Public Health regulations), and
>
>   4. screening instruments and activities related to each of the criteria.
>
> - A procedure to include teaching staff in the screening process and to make the screening results available to the teachers;
>
> - A plan for each student based on the child's assessment;
>
> - A system whereby parents are routinely advised of their child's progress and are provided opportunities for participation and parent education;

- A daily schedule for the project;

- A description of the location and nature of the classrooms to be used by the program;

- A description of the roles of full-time and part-time professional and nonprofessional staff to be paid by the project;

- A staff inservice training plan;

- Linkages with other child-care providers concerned with the education, welfare, health and safety needs of young children, including Head Start and adult literacy programs;

- An evaluation process which will be used to provide continuous, systematic information about the project objectives so that improvements can be made.

Appropriation and Service Levels for the Prekindergarten Program

State Board staff have estimated that 30% of the three- and four-year-old children in Illinois are at risk of academic failure. Others have estimated the same proportion at the national level. Since the implementation of the law, the State Board of Education has given the prekindergarten program its highest priority and requested budget appropriations of the General Assembly consistent with its estimates of service needs for young children in Illinois. For the past three years, the Board's budget request has exceeded the General Assembly appropriations. Currently, only 10% of the potentially eligible children aged 3-5 are served in the state-funded prekindergarten programs.

Both screening programs and prekindergarten programs began in January 1986. Because of varying goals, some of the projects during that year provided services for six weeks or less. Some projects provided screening services only. The 1986-87 school year (FY 87) was the first full year of program operation. Table 1 shows the number of proposals received, projects funded, children served, funds appropriated for the past four fiscal years and the average state cost per child.

Table 1: Appropriation and Service Levels for Prekindergarten Program

	Number of Proposals Received	Number of Projects Funded	Number of Districts Served	Total Appropriation	Average State Cost per Child	Number of Children Served
FY 86 (Jan.-June, 1986)	162	100	232	$12.1 million ($3.1 mil screening) ($9.0 mil program)	$2,243	5,394
FY 87 (July 1986-June 1987)	136	94	202	$12.7 million (screening and program)	$1,827	6,953
FY 88 (July 1987-June 1988)	167	94	178	$12.7 million (screening and program)	$1,807	7,030
FY 89* (July 1988-June 1989)	135	135	280	$23.9 million (screening and program)		11,173

*All data for FY 89 are based on preliminary figures.

The State Board of Education staff provided leadership, consultation, technical assistance, and materials to the prekindergarten projects. Recommendations for improving the curriculum and program practices were provided also in the spring of each year as a result of on-site reviews conducted by early childhood education consultants under contract to the State Board of Education. All of these consultants had expertise in early childhood education, and most were employed in Illinois colleges and universities.

Evaluation of Illinois Prekindergarten Program

Purpose. Each year, State Board of Education staff collect data on prekindergarten programs and the children served in them in order to answer these primary questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the children served in the prekindergarten program?

2. What are the characteristics of the prekindergarten projects in Illinois?

3. How well did the children do in prekindergarten and kindergarten?

4. What factors seem to be related to success of children in prekindergarten?

The answers to these questions form the basis for the first report to the General Assembly on the results and progress of students who were enrolled in preschool education programs.

Evaluation Design and Limitations. The evaluation design included the annual administration and completion of instruments to collect information regarding specific children served in projects funded by the state program, characteristics of the projects, and the status and performance of children after leaving the prekindergarten program.

Two measures were used to identify the relative progress that children made as they progressed through prekindergarten and kindergarten. These progress reports relied on teacher judgment reflected in ratings made for each child.

> After the prekindergarten program. To determine growth at the end of prekindergarten, the children's teachers were asked to rate each child's readiness for kindergarten according to a four-category scale: child is above average in readiness skills for kindergarten; child is within the normal range of readiness skills; child is somewhat below the normal range of readiness skills; or child is clearly deficient in readiness skills.
>
> After kindergarten. To indicate cognitive and social development growth at the end of the children's year in kindergarten, the children's teachers were asked to rate the performance of each child in the areas of readiness for reading, mathematics and language, as well as the social behavior of the child, according to the following categories: above average, average, below average, or inadequate/failure. Further, teachers were asked to indicate the recommended placement for the next

year (which would have been regular first grade for most children served in FY 87) according to these categories: promotion/advance to first grade, advance to next grade level with supplementary services, advance to next grade level with special education services, advance to transition class, refer for special education placement, or retain at current grade level.

There were several limitations in the study design and/or data. First, some information about participating children over the years was lost when children transferred to a school setting other than the one in which they received prekindergarten services.

A second limitation was the lack of a knowledge base about the expected progress of groups of children served in prekindergarten programs in general. Even though children were served in the prekindergarten program, some can be expected to be retained or placed into special education by the end of kindergarten or first grade or even later. The number or rate for these placements is unknown at this time. There is a considerable body of knowledge about the positive effects of prekindergarten programs for at-risk children receiving such services in comparison with similar children not receiving the services. However, the early childhood education field has not yet identified expected outcomes or placement rates for groups of children starting school. Outcomes expressed as statistical expectations such as the percentage of children receiving prekindergarten services who were promoted (or not promoted) or who were placed into special education by a certain grade (or who were not) are useful in an evaluation to determine if the state-funded program as a whole compares favorably with other established findings. The lack of comparative information becomes apparent as we present the findings on how well our prekindergarten children are doing once they have moved into kindergarten and first grade.

Third, in interpreting the results of the information concerning the progress of children served in prekindergarten program, it is also important to recognize that all children who participated in the prekindergarten program had initially been found to be lacking in developmental skills. In this sense, the determination of adequacy of school performance is made relative to the particular school setting where the child attends. A child with average school readiness skills may experience more difficulty in a district where a majority of the children are above-average in readiness skills than would be the case in a school district where a majority of children have below-average readiness skills. Therefore, it is important to recognize that developmental status may be assessed differently across the school districts.

Lastly, the evaluation is based on data on children enrolled in the prekindergarten program for FY 87 and FY 88 only. The children served in the first year of funding (FY 86) could have received services for periods anywhere between six weeks and six months or may have participated in screening programs only. The lack of uniform instructional time makes generalization about the progress of the children in the program questionable for that year. Information about children in the FY 89 program is now being collected and won't be available for release until fall 1989.

Findings

A series of generalizations have been made about the characteristics of children served in the prekindergarten program, the characteristics of their programs, the progress and performance of the children after prekindergarten and the factors which seem to be related to successful projects. Each generalization is referenced by data tables which are found in Appendix C of this report. Except where findings for downstate funded projects differed substantially from those in Chicago or between FY 87 and FY 88, the generalizations are based on statewide data.

1. What are the characteristics of the children served in the prekindergarten program?

   - More than half of the children served were from minority groups. Black children comprised nearly 40% of those served and Hispanic children comprised 13%. Asian children were a little over 2% of the total. Seventy percent of the children in the Chicago projects were Black, a not-unexpected finding since 59% of Chicago's elementary enrollment is Black. There was an increase in the proportion of minority children served during FY 88, from 54 to 59%. (See Tables 2 and 3.)

   - Children in the Chicago prekindergarten projects were more likely to come from single-parent families or live with an adult other than a parent than the children in downstate prekindergarten projects. In downstate projects, about two-thirds of the children came from homes where both parents are present. In Chicago, however, about 50% of the children were from single-parent families or living with another adult. In Illinois, it is estimated that 18% of the families with children under twelve are those with a single head of household. (See Tables 4 and 5.)

   - Nearly 15% of the children had a native language other than English. Slightly more than 10% of the children entered the prekindergarten program from families whose primary language in the home was Spanish, and slightly more than 3% came from families where a language other than English or Spanish was the primary language in the home. (See Table 6.)

   - Proportionately more boys than girls participated in prekindergarten program. About 55% of the children served were male, and 45% were female. (See Table 7.)

   - The screening procedures identified a number of children who had potential health problems. In FY 87, more than 2,100 children who were served in the prekindergarten program lacked immunizations, had vision or hearing deficits, or had other health problems. During FY 88, more than 1,100 such children were identified. Children who were screened but not served were not included in these numbers, although their parents received information about their child's health status. (See Table 8.)

- Most children had no previous preschool experience. Approximately two-thirds of the children had not previously attended a preschool program. Less than 10% previously attended private day care programs, and less than 4% had been in Head Start programs. Thus, the typical prekindergarten student was having his or her first formal experience with education outside the home. (See Table 9.)

- The program served a significant number of poor children. "Poor" was defined as being eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch. About 51% of the children were identified as poor. Nearly 10% of the children were from homes whose relative affluence would have made the children ineligible for free or reduced-price meals. For nearly 40% of the children, either the information was unknown or the project did not offer meals so the proportion of poor children was probably higher than reported. (See Table 10.)

- Children in the prekindergarten program were more likely to be absent from school than older children. On average, children in prekindergarten program were absent about 14 days for the year, a rate somewhat higher than an average of 8 days absence for elementary school-age children. The absence rate for prekindergarten children remained constant for FY 87 and FY 88 even though the average days of attendance were 135.5 and 120.9, respectively. (See Table 11.)

2. What were the characteristics of the prekindergarten projects in Illinois?

- Children were most often provided services in a classroom-type program. Although children could be enrolled in more than one program, about 90% in FY 88 and 86% in FY 87 of the children were served in a classroom, usually in an elementary school. In FY 87, 11.1% of the children were in home-based programs where their parents received direct services by school personnel. The proportion of home-based children dropped to 5.3% in FY 88. Other children received services while attending a day care program or were served by prekindergarten staff on an average of two hours or more per week at another site in the community. (See Table 12.)

- Varying administrative arrangements were used for the operation of projects. The law requires the public school districts to administer the projects, but the specific administrative arrangements can and did vary. Most projects were operated within a single district, but joint agreements among districts were encouraged (e.g., between two and a dozen neighboring districts cooperating to provide prekindergarten services). The proportion of districts participating in a joint agreement increased from 14% to 19% between FY 87 and FY 88. Contractual arrangements also varied. About 10 projects subcontracted with the federally funded Head Start program, private preschools, or other entities to conduct the educational program. Slightly more than 20 projects subcontracted

with special education cooperatives or universities to conduct the screening. More than 20 also subcontracted such noneducational components as transportation or food service to commercial businesses. (See Tables 13 and 14.)

- Most projects operated for at least four days per week. Projects operated anywhere between 1 and 5 days per week, but about 90% operated for at least 4 days per week. The average number of minutes per day increased from 131 minutes (2 1/4 hours) in FY 87 to 168 minutes (2 3/4 hours) in FY 88. (See Table 15.)

- Screening procedures used by districts were successful in identifying the pool of at-risk children for whom the prekindergarten program was designed. Each year, the development of about 25,000 children was assessed by school personnel. Parents approved the screening of their children, usually conducted on the school premises, but also conducted in other day care settings. Of those children screened in FY 87 and FY 88, 43% and 33%, respectively, were found to be eligible to enter the prekindergarten program for at-risk children. From 1,200 (FY 87) to more than 1,700 (FY 88) children had to be placed on waiting lists because of a lack of space. An additional 2,300 (FY 87) to 3,000 (FY 88) were found to be eligible, but were not served due to lack of parent permission to enroll the child. The program would have served an additional 50% had all eligible children been able to participate and had sufficient monies been appropriated. (See Table 16.)

- Parent participation in the prekindergarten programs was high. Projects are required to include parent education and participation as a major focus in the prekindergarten programs. More than 92% of the parents participated in parent program activities sponsored by the projects. More than 40% of the parents participated in parent education classes. After participating in school conferences about their child, a majority of parents were more likely to participate in observation of their child's classroom or home enrichment activities. (See Table 17.)

- The average state cost of the prekindergarten program per child served in FY 88 was $1,800. Nearly 68% of the program costs from state monies went to personnel salaries, a proportion similar to other educational programs. The remainder was spent on non-salaried items. The amount of local monies that districts contributed to the prekindergarten program is not known. Therefore, the total program cost is not known. (See Tables 1 and 18.)

3. How well did the children do in prekindergarten and kindergarten?

- At the end of the prekindergarten program, a majority of the children were judged to be ready for kindergarten. On average, about 60% of the prekindergarten children eligible for kindergarten were rated by their teachers as either above average in readiness skills for kindergarten or within the normal range of readiness

skills for kindergarten. (For FY 87, the total judged ready was 56.5%; for FY 88, the total had increased to 62.2%.) About one-third of each group was rated as "somewhat below the normal range of readiness skills" and around 10% were rated as "clearly deficient in readiness skills" (11.1% for FY 87 and 7.9% for FY 88 children). (See Table 19.)

- After a year in kindergarten, most children who previously were in the prekindergarten program were performing at a level expected of other children. Most dramatically, nearly 78% of the FY 87 prekindergarten children, when rated by their teachers at the end of their kindergarten year, were recommended for promotion to the first grade. An additional 8% were recommended for advancement to first grade with supplemental services (such as Chapter 1 or special education support services), 3.3% to a transitional class, and 2.3% for a special education placement. While retention data nationwide were not available, data from University of Colorado researchers based on 13 states showed that an average of 5.4% of kindergarteners in those states were retained. The retention rate for kindergarteners who received state-funded prekindergarten services was 4.7%, lower than that for kindergarteners in general in the 13 states. (See Table 19.)

- The performance of a large majority of the children receiving prekindergarten services indicated that they were ready for instruction in reading, mathematics, and language. In kindergarten, reading achievement most often refers to the reading readiness skills needed for formal reading instruction in first grade. Nearly 70% of the children (served in FY 87) were rated above average or within the normal range for reading. Mathematics achievement refers to the mathematics readiness skills needed for formal mathematics instruction in first grade. Nearly 74% of the children were judged above average or within the normal range in mathematics by their teachers at the end of their kindergarten year. Language development, which refers to the ability to receive and transmit language, is both fundamental to the cognitive functioning of children and most likely to be deficient or delayed for children considered at risk of academic failure. Again, over 72% of the children who attended prekindergarten programs in FY 87 were rated as above average or within the normal range in language at the end of kindergarten. (See Table 19.)

- The behavior of children in the prekindergarten program was judged appropriate. Behavior refers to the ability to pay attention, follow normal classroom rules for safety and good manners, socialize appropriately among peers, and otherwise develop those attitudes and skills conducive to good learning. The behavior of nearly three-fourths of the children served in FY 87 was rated above average or within a normal range by their teachers. (See Table 19.)

- The performance of children in the Chicago prekindergarten projects was similar to that of children in downstate prekindergarten projects. Even though Chicago children had more characteristics generally associated with being at risk of academic failure, the performance of these children was comparable to the performance of children in downstate projects. The proportion of children (from FY 87) in downstate and Chicago prekindergarten projects judged as above average and average in reading, mathematics, and language was roughly the same (reaching more than 70% for the downstate children and slightly less than 70% for the Chicago children). The differences were 2.5% in reading, 8.4% in mathematics and 5.1% in language favoring downstate projects. In the area of behavior, the difference between children in downstate projects and Chicago projects was about 10%, favoring downstate projects. (See Table 20.)

4. Which factors seem to be related to success of children in prekindergarten?

Local diversity and flexibility characterized most aspects of the prekindergarten programs. Nevertheless, some factors could be identified which appear to be associated with the overall success of children served in these programs. Three factors in particular should be examined over the forthcoming years to determine their relative staying power and implications for possible future state action.

- Children who had a second year in a prekindergarten program performed better in kindergarten readiness than those who had only one year in the program. Children who were in a prekindergarten program for two years seemed to do better in kindergarten readiness skills than those receiving only one year. More than 68% of the children receiving two years of prekindergarten were rated above average or within the normal range while 63% of those with one year of prekindergarten were so rated. (See Table 21.)

- Children whose parents participated in parent involvement activities were more successful than those children whose parents did not. Somewhat more than 65% of the children whose parents participated in parent education or other parent involvement activities offered by the prekindergarten program were rated as above average or within the normal range in readiness for kindergarten as compared with about 57% of the children whose parents did not participate in any of the parent involvement activities. (See Table 22.)

- The days of attendance in prekindergarten program may be related to children's success. Both in FY 87 and FY 88 the higher the days of attendance of children in a program, the more likely they were to be judged by their teachers as having above average and normal readiness skills for kindergarten. (See Table 23.)

Summary and Conclusions

The Illinois prekindergarten program was established in July 1985 to provide grants to local school districts to screen and provide educational services for three- and four-year-old children found to be at risk of academic failure. The rationale for the program was based in research which showed that at-risk children can benefit academically and socially by participating in such educational programs before entering kindergarten.

There are an estimated 112,000 three- and four-year-old children who may be at risk of academic failure. Because state appropriations for the program have been significantly lower than the amount projected by the State Board of Education as necessary to serve these children, even on a phase-in basis, the program has been able to serve less than 10% of the potentially eligible children.

However, in spite of the relatively small number of children who have been served by the state's prekindergarten program, it appears to be very successful. Indicators of that success, as described in this report, include the following:

1. A significant majority of the two groups of children who participated in the prekindergarten program (in FY 87 and FY 88) have been judged by their teachers as ready for progression to the next step, i.e., kindergarten or first grade. Given that these children had previously been screened and identified as at risk of academic failure, this unequivocal judgment to promote them must be viewed as impressive.

2. The screening process is drawing children who have not been otherwise served. (Few had attended any previous preschool programs, thus refuting early apprehension among some educators in Illinois that the state-funded program would compete with other private and government-funded preschool programs serving at-risk children.) Screening also appropriately identifies those children who are at risk of academic failure. (A majority are from poor and minority families and often have only one parent, all characteristics commonly associated with being at risk.)

3. The screening process is also serving to identify and bring appropriate attention to health problems in young children, including many who are not eligible for the program itself.

Although the State Board of Education has established specific requirements for the prekindergarten program--requirements based on research about effective programs for at-risk children, local school districts have a significant amount of flexibility in shaping their projects. As a consequence, while most programs in Illinois provide services directly to children in a setting other than their home and emphasize developmental and language activities, there are many variations in assessment criteria, scheduling and administrative arrangements.

The data indicate that at least three factors may be related to the success of children in the program.

- Children who had a second year of prekindergarten program experience performed better in kindergarten readiness than those who had only one year in the program.

- Children whose parents participated in parent involvement activities were more successful than those children whose parents did not.

- Days of attendance in the prekindergarten program may be related to children's success.

These factors will be closely monitored in the future, and if these early findings remain consistent, the state will need to consider their implications for program structure and funding.

This first review of Illinois prekindergarten program has identified several other areas which may need attention in the future. The state must determine whether indicators of program success should be expanded to include measures in addition to the ones being used in order to get a broader description of what happens to children as they progress through school. The state also needs to gather information about local school districts' fiscal contributions to the state-funded prekindergarten programs for use in determining actual program and per-pupil costs. Finally, the state needs to consider student follow-up and reporting requirements associated with the program.

This first review of the Illinois prekindergarten program has been extremely encouraging. It demonstrates that the services being provided for children at risk of academic failure can make a difference in their educational readiness and their school performance. We have much yet to learn, but the state's dollars appear to be very well invested.

LLW#163RE

Appendix A

State Board of Education Policy Statement
on
Early Childhood Education
Adopted May 9, 1985
Springfield, Illinois

Early childhood education, for the purposes of this policy, constitutes those educational programs, practices, and services which have as a primary focus the developmental needs of children prior to the time they enter first grade. It will be the policy of the Illinois State Board of Education to seek such support as is necessary to encourage the development of early childhood education programs based on the following considerations.

A) Positive, nurturing experiences in the early years of life are essential in helping children develop intellectually, socially, and emotionally, and future academic success in school is strongly influenced by the character of early experiences.

B) Children identified as being at risk of academic failure can dramatically improve their chances for success through participation in early childhood education programs.

C) Significant developmental differences exist among children, and particular attention should be given to such individual differences in the development of early education programs and services.

D) Meeting the education, health, welfare, and safety needs of young children requires collaboration among various childcare providers.

E) The quality of instructional staff and leadership are especially critical elements in effective early childhood education programs.

The Board adopted the following recommendations.

The Board should seek legislation to:

PREKINDERGARTEN

A) Require that school districts develop screening procedures, by January 1986, for the purpose of identifying children at risk of academic failure, such screening procedures to be based on criteria promulgated by the State Board of Education;

B) Require school districts to identify all resident children who are to reach their fourth birthday by December 1, 1986; educationally screen such children; and through doing so, identify those among them who are judged to be at risk of academic failure;

C) Require school districts to provide, beginning in fall 1986, full-day prekindergarten programs for all resident children having been identified through the district screening procedures as being at risk of academic failure.

Further, the State Board of Education should:

D) Assume a leadership role in cooperation with other State agencies having a shared interest in the welfare of young children, particularly the Departments of Children and Family Services, Public Health, and Public Aid, in developing an intra-state data bank of registered, licensed, or approved childcare, daycare, or preschool providers by school district and making such information available to the public. Such cooperation should also be directed at assuring consistency of policies and regulations regarding the educational component of programs for young children.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

A) Encourage local school districts, by the opening of school, fall 1985, to provide full-day kindergarten for all children;

B) Require local school districts, by the opening of school, fall 1986, to provide full-day kindergarten for all children; and

C) Stipulate that while children whose fifth birthdays occur by December 1 of a given year are eligible to attend kindergarten, children under this age may enroll in kindergarten if they are deemed ready to attend school and that no child eligible by age to attend school be denied entrance into school.

Concurrent with Board action, the agency will:

A) Design a comprehensive public awareness program to inform Illinois policymakers, citizens, parents, and educational personnel of the importance of early childhood education and of the importance of parental involvement in such programs;

B) Identify exemplary prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, widely disseminate findings and coordinate the training necessary to the wide adoption of such programs;

C) Initiate and support efforts to improve the preservice and inservice training of early childhood education teachers, elementary teachers, and principals; and

D) Engage in future study of the issue of parent education in Illinois schools, identify the range and character of needs, explore alternatives, and offer appropriate recommendations to the State Board of Education.

Appendix B

The School Code of Illinois

Sec. 2-3.71 Grants for preschool educational programs. (a) The State Board of Education shall implement and administer a grant program consisting of grants to public school districts to conduct preschool educational programs for children ages 3 to 5 which include a parent education component. A public school district which receives grants under this Section, may subcontract with a private school, not-for-profit corporation or other governmental agency to conduct a preschool educational program. All teachers of such programs shall either hold early childhood teaching certificates issued under Article 21 or Section 34-83 of this Code or shall meet the requirements for supervising a day care center under the Child Care Act of 1969, as amended.

(b) The State Board of Education shall provide the primary source of funding through appropriations for this program. Such funds shall be distributed for the benefit of children who because of their home and community environment are subject to such language, cultural, economic and like disadvantages that they have been determined as a result of screening procedures to be at risk of academic failure. Such screening procedures shall be based on criteria established by the State Board of Education.

(c) The State Board of Education shall develop and provide evaluation tools, including tests, that school districts may use to evaluate children for school readiness prior to age 5. The State Board of Education shall require school districts to obtain consent from the parents or guardians of children before any evaluations are conducted. The State Board of Education shall encourage local school districts to evaluate the population of preschool children in their districts and provide preschool programs, pursuant to this Section, where appropriate.

(d) The State Board of Education shall report to the General Assembly by July 1, 1989 and every 3 years thereafter, on the results and progress of students who were enrolled in preschool educational programs, including an assessment of which programs have been most successful in promoting academic excellence and alleviating academic failure. The State Board of Education shall assess the academic progress of all students who have been enrolled in preschool educational programs.

LLW#163RE

Appendix C - Data Tables

Tables 2 - 23

Table 2: Ethnicity of Children Served in Prekindergarten Program, Statewide

ETHNIC GROUP	FY 87 # Children	FY 87 % Children	FY 88 # Children	FY 88 % Children
White, not of Hispanic origin	3,167	45.6%	2,874	40.9%
Black, not of Hispanic origin	2,671	38.2%	2,962	42.1%
Hispanic	924	13.3%	971	13.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	162	2.3%	197	2.8%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	4	0.1%	6	0.1%
Unknown	25	0.4%	20	0.3%
	6,953		7,030	

Table 3: Ethnicity of Children Served in Chicago Prekindergarten Program

ETHNIC GROUPS	FY 87 % of Children Chicago	FY 87 % of Children Downstate	FY 88 % of Children Chicago	FY 88 % of Children Downstate
White, not of Hispanic origin	6.7%	69.4%	6.5%	63.8%
Black, not of Hispanic origin	70.3%	18.8%	69.0%	23.9%
Hispanic	21.5%	8.3%	22.3%	8.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.4%	2.9%	1.9%	3.3%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Unknown	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.4%

Table 4: Family Structure of Children Served, Statewide

FAMILY STRUCTURE	FY 87 # Children	FY 87 % Children	FY 88 # Children	FY 88 % Children
Both Parents in Home	4,014	57.7%	3,738	53.2%
Single-Parent Home	2,600	37.4%	2,609	37.1%
Child Lives with Other Adult (Grand-parent, etc.)	126	1.8%	142	2.0%
Other	87	1.3%	73	1.0%
Unknown	126	1.8%	468	6.4%
Totals	6,953		7,030	

Table 5: Family Structure of Children Served, Chicago and Downstate

	FY 87 Both Parents at Home # Children	FY 87 Both Parents at Home # Children	FY 87 Single Parent at Home # Children	FY 87 Single Parent at Home # Children
CHICAGO	979	37.0%	1,514	57.3%
DOWNSTATE	3,035	70.4%	1,086	25.2%
TOTALS	4,014		2,600	

	FY 88 Both Parents at Home # Children	FY 88 Both Parents at Home # Children	FY 88 Single Parent at Home # Children	FY 88 Single Parent at Home # Children
CHICAGO	974	34.3%	1,371	48.3%
DOWNSTATE	2,764	66.0%	1,238	29.5%
TOTALS	3,738		2,609	

Table 6: Primary Language of Children Served in Prekindergarten Program

LANGUAGE	FY 87 # Children	FY 87 % Children	FY 88 # Children	FY 88 % Children
English	6,010	86.4%	6,008	85.5%
Spanish	715	10.3%	748	10.6%
Other Languages	228	3.3%	274	3.9%
Totals	6,953		7,030	

Table 7: Gender of Children Served in Prekindergarten Program

SEX	FY 87 # Children	FY 87 % Children	FY 88 # Children	FY 88 % Children
Male	3,895	56.0%	3,847	54.7%
Female	3,056	44.0%	3,182	45.3%
Unknown	2	0.0%	1	0.0%
Totals	6,953		7,030	

Table 8: Identification of Health Status of Chidren Served in Prekindergarten Program

HEALTH PROBLEMS	FY 87 # Children	FY 87 % Children	FY 88 # Children	FY 88 % Children
None	5,051	72.6%	5,916	84.2%
Vision Deficits	161	2.3%	100	1.4%
Hearing Deficits	174	2.5%	142	2.0%
Immunization Needs	891	12.8%	86	1.2%
Other Problems	881	12.7%	856	12.2%
Unknown	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Totals*	(7,158)		(7,100)	

*Some children had more than one health problem, resulting in duplicate counts.

Table 9: Prior Preschool Experience of Children Served in Prekindergarten

PREVIOUS PRE-SCHOOL EXPERIENCE	FY 87		FY 88	
	# Children	% Children	# Children	% Children
None	4,383	63.0%	5,056	71.9%
Private Daycare	578	8.3%	501	7.1%
Chapter I	35	0.5%	42	0.6%
Special Education	106	1.5%	84	1.2%
Head Start	212	3.1%	255	3.6%
2nd Year Prekindergarten	905	13.0%	N.A.	N.A.
Other Preschool (State)	356*	5.2%*	94	1.3%
Other School Programs	N.A.	N.A.	276	3.9%
Unknown	378	5.4%	722	10.3%
Totals	(6,953)		(7,030)	

* Possible duplicate count for some children who were in 2nd year of Prekindergarten.

Table 10: Family Income Level of Children Served in Prekindergarten Program

ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS	FY 87 # Children	FY 87 % Children	FY 88 # Children	FY 88 % Children
Eligible for Free Lunch	3,186	45.8%	3,322	47.3%
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	390	5.6%	367	5.2%
Family Income Exceeds Free/ Reduced Lunch Eligibility	637	9.2%	736	10.5%
Unknown (Food Service Not Provided in School)	2,740	39.4%	2,605	37.0%
Totals	6,953		7,030	

Table 11: Average Attendance and Absence Days of Children Served in the Prekindergarten Program

DAYS OF ACTUAL ATTEND/ABSENCE	FY 87 # Children	FY 87 Mean # Days	FY 88 # Children	FY 88 Mean # Days
Attendance Days	6,953	135.5	7,030	120.9
Absence Days	6,953	14.4	7,030	14.6

Table 12: Number and Percent of Children Served by Types of Programs

PROGRAM TYPE	FY 87 # Children	FY 87 % Children	FY 88 # Children	FY 88 % Children
Home-based Instruction	851	11.1%	389	5.3%
Classroom Group	6,575	86.0%	6,616	89.8%
Other	223	2.9%	360	4.9%
Totals*	(7,649)*		(7,365)*	

* Children may have been enrolled in two or more program types simultaneously, resulting in duplicate counts.

Table 13: Number of Participating Districts and Joint Agreements

	FY 87	FY 88
Total # of Projects Funded	96	94
Total # of Participating Districts	202	178
Total # of Joint Agreements	15 (14%)	18 (19%)

Table 14: Services Subcontracted to Other Groups

	FY 87	FY 88
Number of Projects with Services Subcontracted for:		
Screening	31	30
Educational Program	11	9
Transportation	28	22
Pupil Personnel Services	11	6
Total Number of Projects with Services Subcontracted	53	48

Number of Projects with Subcontracted Services, FY 88

Subcontractor	Screening	Educational Program	Transportation	Pupil Pers. Services
Other Public School Districts	3		1	
Federal-Funded Educational Program		2	1	
Special Education Cooperative	20			1
Nonpublic School	2	2		1
Commerical Business		1	20	
Not-for-Profit Community Group	1	1		
State Service Agency	2	1		2
University or College	2	2		2
Total	30	9	22	6

Table 15: Days Per Week and Minutes Per Day in Operation

Days Per Week in Operation	FY 87	FY 88
1	2.2%	4.4%
2	2.2%	3.3%
3	3.2%	5.5%
4	31.2%	48.6%
5	61.3%	38.1%
Average Number of Minutes Per Day in in Operation	131	168

Table 16: Number of Children Screened, Enrolled, and Unserved

	FY 87 # Children	FY 88 # Children
Children Screened	26,749	23,993
Eligible Children Enrolled in Programs	6,953	7,030
Children on Waiting Lists	1,225	1,768
Eligible-But-Unserved Children	2,360	3,015

Table 17: Number and Percent of Children Whose Parents Participated in Parent Program Activities*

PARENT ACTIVITY	FY 87 # Children	FY 87 % Children	FY 88 # Children	FY 88 % Children
Activities in/ Observation of Child's Classroom	3,500	50.3%	4,041	57.5%
Field Trips	2,122	30.5%	2,653	37.7%
Parent Education Classes	3,018	43.4%	3,103	44.1%
Home Enrichment Activities	3,991	57.4%	3,989	56.7%
School Conferences	5,013	72.1%	5,943	84.5%
Other Activity	1,503	21.6%	2,929	41.7%
Non-Participation	524	7.5%	392	5.6%
Total Participation		92.5%		94.4%

* Since parents were encouraged to participate in more than one parent activity, the above numbers in are duplicate counts.

Table 18: Primary Uses of State Funds for Prekindergarten Projects in Downstate Illinois

	FY 87 Salary	FY 87 Other	FY 87 Total	FY 88 Salary	FY 88 Other	FY 88 Total
Instructional Services	51.7%	4.5%	56.2%	55.1%	5.9%	61.0%
Instructional Materials		2.5%	2.5%		2.5%	2.5%
Instructional Equipment		0.9%	0.9%		1.6%	1.6%
Teaching Supplies		1.9%	1.9%		1.4%	1.4%
Transportation	1.1%	8.7%	9.8%	0.8%	7.3%	8.1%
Improvement of Instr.	0.5%	1.0%	1.5%	0.5%	1.7%	2.2%
Other Items	15.1%	12.1%	27.2%	10.9%	12.3%	23.2%
Total	68.4%	31.6%	100.0%	67.3%	32.7%	100.0%

Table 19: Performance of Prekindergarten Children

FY 87 - Kindergarten*	Number	Percent
Above average in readiness skills for kindergarten	828	18.4
Within the normal range of readiness skills	1,718	38.1
Somewhat below the normal range of readiness skills	1,463	32.4
Clearly deficient in readiness skills	502	11.1

Assessments after Kindergarten

Reading	Number	Percent
Above average	666	19.5
Within normal range	1,679	49.2
Below normal range	657	19.3
Clearly deficient	164	4.8
Unknown/records not available	245	7.2

Mathematics	Number	Percent
Above average	655	19.2
Within normal range	1,862	54.6
Below normal range	530	15.5
Clearly deficient	114	3.3
Unknown/records not available	249	7.3

Language	Number	Percent
Above average	588	17.2
Within normal range	1,889	55.4
Below normal range	574	16.8
Clearly deficient	96	2.8
Unknown/records not available	263	7.7

Behavior	Number	Percent
Above average	851	24.9
Within normal range	1,682	49.1
Below normal range	496	14.5
Clearly deficient	132	3.9
Unknown/records not available	263	7.7

Recommended Placement for Next Year	Number	Percent
Promotion/advance to next grade (regular)	2,658	77.7
Advance to next grade level (supplemental services)	277	8.1
Advance to next grade level (special ed service)	35	1.0
Advance to transition class	114	3.3
Refer for special ed placement	79	2.3
Retention at current grade level	160	4.7
Unknown/records not available	100	2.9

*Excludes students whose scores were not available and those who were underaged for kindergarten the following year.

Table 19: Performance of Prekindergarten Children (Continued)

FY 88 - Kindergarten*

Readiness for Kindergarten	Number	Percent
Above average in readiness skills for kindergarten	803	17.7
Within the normal range of readiness skills	2,016	44.5
Somewhat below the normal range of readiness skills	1,350	29.8
Clearly deficient in readiness skills	361	7.9

*Excludes students whose scores were not available and those who were underaged for kindergarten the following year.

Table 20: Performance Levels for Chicago and Downstate Participants in Kindergarten

Area	Downstate Achievement (1,957 children) Above Average	Average	Chicago Achievement (1,454 children) Above Average	Average
Reading	20.5%	49.3%	18.2%	49.1%
Mathematics	20.1%	57.3%	18.0%	51.0%
Language	16.9%	57.9%	17.7%	52.0%
Behavior	25.0%	53.8%	24.8%	43.3%

*Students were most likely to have started prekindergarten in FY 87.

Table 21. Percentage Distribution of Ratings of Students in Kindergarten Readiness Skills by Number of Years of Prekindergarten Programs Attended

Years of Pre-kindergarten	PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTIONS OF RATINGS Above Average	Normal	Below Normal	Deficient	Above Average & Normal
1 year	18.81	44.48	29.53	7.18	63.29
2 years	21.32	47.16	27.07	4.44	68.48
Overall	19.79	45.52	28.58	6.12	65.31

Table 22. Percentage Distribution of Ratings of Students in Kindergarten Readiness Skills by Parent Participation in the Programs

Parent Participation	PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTIONS OF RATINGS Above Average	Normal	Below Normal	Deficient	Above Average & Normal
Classroom	21.48	45.44	27.86	5.23	66.92
Field Trips	23.10	45.74	26.90	4.26	68.84
P. Ed. Classes	22.21	45.36	27.48	4.94	67.57
Enrichment	23.88	45.44	25.28	5.40	69.32
P-T Conference	20.13	45.90	28.14	5.83	66.03
Other Activities	18.62	48.82	26.74	5.82	67.44
Overall (with participation)	19.99	45.52	28.45	6.04	65.51
No participation	11.62	45.35	33.72	9.30	56.98

Table 23: Percentage Distribution of Ratings of Students in Kindergarten Readiness Skills by Days Attended Per Year

DAYS ATTENDED PER YEAR	PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RATINGS Above Average	Normal	Below Normal	Deficient	Above Average and Normal
75-103	15.05	44.54	30.93	9.48	59.59
104-132	19.04	47.34	27.07	6.55	66.38
133-161	21.23	43.83	29.82	5.13	65.06
162-190	22.82	50.62	22.41	4.15	73.44
Overall	19.79	45.52	28.58	6.12	65.31

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